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**MA THESIS, ARAB AND ISLAMIC CIVILISATIONS**

**AISHA MUHAMMAD IYAWA**

**800121248**

**THE ANALYSIS OF THE KEY DOCTRINES OF BOKO HARAM (JAMA'AT AHL-I- SUNNAH LI AL-DA'WATI WA AL-JIHAD)**

**SUPERVISOR**

**PROFESSOR MOHAMED SERAG**

**READERS**

**PROFESSOR ABDUR RAHMAN SALEM**

**Dr. HODA EL SA'ADI**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my exceptional family. My lovely son and husband, Abdussalam Abdulqadir Buba and Abdulqadir Muhammad Buba. Thank you for the love, support and patience throughout this research.

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## Introduction

Boko Haram is a group known today as one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations.<sup>1</sup> They were mainly based in North Eastern Nigeria and later spread to some neighboring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Mali.<sup>2</sup> The name the group indicated to be identified as is “Jama’at Ahl-i- Sunnah Li Al-da’wati Wa Al-Jihad” which can be translated as people of Sunnah for preaching and struggle, more commonly, the group is known as Boko Haram<sup>3</sup>. Recent developments showed that the split of the group led one faction of the group to be identified as Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) after their allegiance to Islamic State, also known as ISIS<sup>4</sup>. However, this research will focus on the group before the split, mainly the early stage of their development. The group will be referred to as Boko Haram throughout this research. Muhammed Yusuf founded the group in 2002<sup>5</sup>. They became known to the world in 2009 after their major clash<sup>6</sup> with the government forces in retaliation to the death of some of their members. They started as a non-violent and non-radical organization but

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<sup>1</sup>Perouse De Montclos, Marc Antoine. Ed. “The Message and Methods of Boko Haram”. *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. vol. 2. 2014, pp 9-32.

<sup>2</sup> Bamidele, Oluwaseun. “Nigeria’s Terrorist Threat: Present Contexts and the Future of Sub Saharan Africa.” *International Journal on World Peace*, Vol. 30, no 4, Dec. 2013, pp 7-10.  
 Michaels, Jim. Boko Haram terror attacks spread to Nigeria’s neighbors. *USA Today, News*. 9 Feb. 2015. Web. [www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/02/09/boko-haram-nigeria-africa-union/23139643/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/02/09/boko-haram-nigeria-africa-union/23139643/) Retrieved 14 Dec. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Murtada, Ahmed. *Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities*. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Withnall, Adam. “Boko Haram renames itself Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP) as militants launch new offensive against government forces”. *Independent, News*. 26 April 2015.  
[www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/boko-haram-renames-itself-islamic-states-west-africa-province-iswap-as-militants-launch-new-10204918.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/boko-haram-renames-itself-islamic-states-west-africa-province-iswap-as-militants-launch-new-10204918.html) Retrieved 14 Dec. 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Walker, Andrew. “What is Boko Haram?” Washington DC. The United State Institute of Peace. 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Mantzikos, Ioannis. Ed. “What Do We Really Know About Boko Haram” *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*. e-International Relations. Bristol, UK. Oct. 2013.

later became radicalized and violent<sup>7</sup>. The name “Boko Haram” was what the populace used for them<sup>8</sup>. The name came about because it was one of their early messages in their propagation and preaching, they used to say *Boko is haram*, which means western system of education is prohibited<sup>9</sup>. The media picked it up from the people and it became common.

Boko Haram has created doctrines that they aim to impose in Nigeria and some parts of Africa. In order to better understand the reasons behind their radicalization, The specific scope of this research interest is the analysis of the key doctrines of Boko Haram. This research analysis will be limited to three basic doctrines, which are as follows:

- Democracy is prohibited and authority belongs to only Allah not to any government that is not based on the teachings of Quran and Sunnah (Quran and Sunnah are referred to as the primary sources of Islamic law).
- Western system of education (Boko) that does not follow Quran and Sunnah is prohibited.
- Working under the government which is not established according to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, is also prohibited. These doctrines are the most emphasized messages of the Boko Haram group.

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<sup>7</sup> Mantzikos, Ioannis. Ed. “What Do We Really Know About Boko Haram” *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*. e-International Relations. Bristol, UK. Oct. 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Murtada, Ahmed. *Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities*. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

The issue of Boko Haram has received considerable critical attention. It is one of the contemporary threats of the globe<sup>10</sup>. They created a devastation that is having an adverse impact on Islam and the socioeconomic situation in the region and in some parts of Africa. There is a growing body of literature on Boko Haram, mostly focusing on the political aspects. Little emphasis has been put on the religious approach. This study is important because it will approach the issue from a religious perspective. This will be done by analyzing some of their doctrines to challenge and correct some of their misconceptions of Islam. Moreover, being a Nigerian from the North East and specifically from Borno state (Borno is the main center of Boko Haram), I have a special interest to study Boko Haram's religious perspective and views to correct misconceptions and spread awareness which may help in terminating the crisis of Boko Haram.

### **SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

Boko Haram claims their agenda is in the name of religion<sup>11</sup>. However, most of the available written works on Boko Haram took a political approach such as corruption, marginalization, socio-economic disparity, and etcetera to address the issue. Slight emphasis on religious approach has been made. Unlike most research, this research will approach the matter from a different perspective. The research will focus on the religious ideology of Boko Haram through analyzing their works. It will analyze their key doctrines by studying their interpretation

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<sup>10</sup> Goerg, Madeleine and Dembinski, S. "Boko Haram Is Now a Global Threat" Real Clear World. 19 March 2015. [www.realclearworld.com/articles/2015/03/19/boko\\_haram\\_is\\_now\\_a\\_global\\_threat\\_111059.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2015/03/19/boko_haram_is_now_a_global_threat_111059.html)

<sup>11</sup> "Boko Haram". People and Blog. YouTube. Uploaded by Abdoul Aziz Niameze, 13 Nov. 2016. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsbawU8uz3Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsbawU8uz3Y) Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa. 15 March, 2017.



of some verses from the Quran and work of Ibn Taimiyah (728/1328)<sup>12</sup>. The work of Ibn Taimiyah was chosen for this research because Ibn Taimiyah is one of the main sources used by Boko Haram and earlier studies on Boko Haram highlighted that Ibn Taimiyah had a great impact on Boko Haram's doctrines and beliefs<sup>13</sup>. Analyzing Boko Haram's interpretation of the above-mentioned sources will shed light to understand more the reasons behind their radicalization. However, studying the ideology of Boko Haram is not an easy task because of the scarcity of written primary sources. The only available written primary source is a book written in Arabic (Hadhihi Aqeedatuna Wa Minhaj Da'awatina which means "This is Our Creed and Method of Our Preaching")<sup>14</sup> by Muhammad Yusuf (founder of Boko Haram) which has an issue of integrity as to the exact date of publication<sup>15</sup>. Other available primary sources are interviews and sermons of the Boko Haram leaders on YouTube videos.

This research aims to examine the religious perspective of the Boko Haram group, to challenge their misconceptions of Islam and spread awareness. This can help to contribute to the ways of dealing with the crisis of Boko Haram.

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<sup>12</sup> Leaman, Oliver. *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*. Thoemmes Continuum, New York; London, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Perouse De Montclos, Marc Antoine. Ed. "The Message and Methods of Boko Haram". *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. vol. 2. 2014, pp 9-32.

Bintube, Mustapha. "Boko Haram Phenomenon: Genesis and Development in North Eastern Region Nigeria".

*International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*. vol.1, no.1, March 2015, pp 1-22.

Murtada, Ahmed. *Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities*. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Perouse De Montclos, Marc Antoine. Ed. "The Message and Methods of Boko Haram". *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. vol. 2. 2014. pp 9-32.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, P.3 of introduction.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

**BOKO:** the word *Boko* is a Hausa term (Hausa is one of the three major languages of Nigeria). According to Hausa dictionary, one of the meanings of the word *Boko* is any type of reading or education that is not related to Islam<sup>16</sup>. According to Muhammad Yusuf, the founder of the Boko Haram organization, “*Boko* is a contemporary knowledge that was brought to us by the colonial rulers”<sup>17</sup>. In the Northern part of Nigeria, there are mostly two types of educational institutions, “*Islamiyya* and *Boko*”. *Islamiyya* is the system of education that deals mainly with the religious teachings of Islam, while *Boko* is the system of education that deals with secular knowledge. However, in the contemporary situation, you may find schools that carry both aspects of education.

**HARAM:** the word *Haram* is originally Arabic word which is used in Hausa language with nearly the same meaning which means “forbidden, sin, unlawful, taboo or even transgression”<sup>18</sup>. In Hausa language, the term *Haram* is generally used as “forbidden”, for instance when it is said “*Boko Haramun ne*” in Hausa language, it means “Boko is forbidden” or “western system of education is forbidden”. According to Hausa dictionary, one of the meanings of the word “*Haram*” is anything that is not according to the Quran or therein forbidden<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Hausa English Dictionary. Def 7. Web. 2002. [maguzawa.dyndns.ws/frame.html](http://maguzawa.dyndns.ws/frame.html). 14 Dec. 2016

<sup>17</sup> “muqabalamaInIsaali bauchida malnmuhammadyusufmaiduguri akan karatun boko haram7”. People and Blogs. YouTube, uploaded by Muhammad Bukar, 23 Jan. 2011.Web. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JITOPgOzGkc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JITOPgOzGkc) Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa, 17 Dec. 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Arabic English Dictionary.Bab.la, Def. 1, 2, 4 and 6. Web. Nd. [en.bab.la/dictionary/english-arabic/haram](http://en.bab.la/dictionary/english-arabic/haram) 14 Dec. 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Hausa English Dictionary. Def. 1. Web. 2002. [maguzawa.dyndns.ws/frame.html](http://maguzawa.dyndns.ws/frame.html) 14 Dec. 2016.

DOCTRINES; this is a principle or body of principles presented for acceptance or belief, as by a religious, political, scientific, or philosophic group; dogma<sup>20</sup>. After the transformation of Boko Haram from non-violent to violent group, they demanded for governance of Nigeria based on their interpretation of Sharia that suits the doctrines they created.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

The focus of this research is the analysis of the key doctrines of Boko Haram, which can shed light on understanding the reasons behind their radicalization and violence. Facts have been recorded that the Boko Haram group is radical and violent in their actions<sup>21</sup>. Why are these people radicalized and violent in carrying out their objectives even though they read the same sources that non-violent Muslims read?

## HYPOTHESIS

The key doctrines of Boko Haram play an important role to facilitate recruitment into the group.

## METHODOLOGY

The sources of data collection adopted in this research are content analysis of Boko Haram sources and review of documents written on Boko Haram. The idea that Boko Haram is violent in trying to fulfill their agenda can be analyzed through the study of their key doctrines.

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<sup>20</sup> "Doctrine." American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. 2011. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Web, 4 Jan. 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Bamidele, Oluwaseun. "Nigeria's Terrorist Threat: Present Contexts and the Future of Sub Saharan Africa." International Journal on World Peace, Vol. 30, no 4, Dec. 2013, pp 7-10.

This will be done by studying their interpretation of; verses from the Quran and the work of Ibn Taimiyah. A particular work was chosen “*The Criterion Between the Allies of the Merciful and the Allies of the Devil*” because it was used by Boko Haram to justify their argument on one of their doctrines. Ibn Taimiyah is the main scholar who was believed to have the greatest influence on Boko Haram.<sup>22</sup> They named their learning centers and mosque after him. They refer to him in several of their recorded lectures as source of knowledge.

The gradual transformation of Boko Haram from non-violent to violent may be understood through their interpretations of their sources of knowledge. The limitations of primary sources to YouTube videos and other media sources have cut down this research access to written primary sources. With media as the main means of broadcast, Boko Haram has managed to gain a large number of recruits. The vulnerability of youths due to high rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria may have contributed to the escalation of violence in Boko Haram. To focus on understanding some interpretations of Boko Haram’s sources, the key doctrines have been limited to only three as mentioned earlier.

The content outlined for the work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will discuss the historical background to the rise of Boko Haram and their development. History of a group similar to Boko Haram that occurred in Borno state will be tackled. The development and transformation of Boko Haram from a non-violent to a violent group will also be discussed. The second chapter will discuss the methods and style used by Boko Haram in spreading and delivering their ideology, and the focus here will be on their style of proselytization and their

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<sup>22</sup> Perouse De Montclos, Marc Antoine. Ed. “The Message and Methods of Boko Haram”. *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. vol. 2. 2014, pp 9-32.

focused area of study regarding teaching their followers. The third and last chapter is the analyses of the Key doctrines of Boko Haram. In this chapter, the focus will be analysis on interpretations of Boko Haram to specific verses from the Quran as well as some works of Ibn Taimiyah that were used to establish the key doctrines of Boko Haram. The work will end with conclusion and recommendations.

## **SURVEY OF SOURCES**

This research will be conducted by surveying the available material ranging from primary to secondary sources. Some of these sources will be retrieved from the Internet while access to other sources will be through direct contact with academic experts who are living in Nigeria and have written their own analysis on the case of Boko Haram. International sources will also be referred to for the research. The primary sources are limited to YouTube videos of interviews, lectures and sermons recorded with Boko Haram members. Hearing from the Boko Haram members will give a better understanding of their interpretations. The recordings are in different Nigerian languages. The writer will translate some of these languages, while the languages that the writer is not familiar with such as the Kanuri language (Kanuri language is one of the minority languages in Northeast of Nigeria) will be translated by experts in these languages. It is also important to note that the only written primary source is a book written by Muhammad Yusuf in Arabic language titled “Hadhihi Aqeedatuna Wa Minhaj Da’awatina (This is Our Creed and Method of Our Preaching)”<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Murtada, Ahmed. *Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities*. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Analysts from different fields have applied many theories, to study the case of Boko Haram<sup>24</sup>. Theories such as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution have been functional in studying the case of Boko Haram. Stating that, "all species of organisms arise and develop through the natural selection of small, inherited variations that increase the individual's ability to compete, survive, and reproduce."<sup>25</sup> Boko Haram has portrayed a substantial transformation from non-violent to violent group. Circumstances such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of good governance etcetera.,<sup>26</sup> have contributed to their evolution into aggressive and brutal human beings. It was a gradual process that took place with Boko Haram. At the beginning of their emergence before the year 2009, the group was only known for their preaching in extreme language verbally attacking secular authorities and other religious sects. However, after 2009, the group moved completely to the physical violence phase. They carried out assassinations, suicide bombings, kidnapping and taking hostages<sup>27</sup>. Their constant fight made them adaptive and resistible in their struggle to fulfill their agenda. Earlier studies relate that the group was earlier established with the name Ahlul Sunnah wa jama'at hijrah<sup>28</sup> (People of Sunnah and Migration), this was when they withdrew from the society and moved to some remote place called kanama (Kanama is a small village in one of the Nigerian states called Yobe) in 1992<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Bintube, Mustapha. "Boko Haram Phenomenon: Genesis and Development in North Eastern Region Nigeria". International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research. vol.1, no.1, March 2015, pp 1-22.

<sup>25</sup> Darwin, Charles. *The Origin of Species*. Penguin, Harmondsworth, U.S.A 1968.

<sup>26</sup> Bintube, Mustapha. "Boko Haram Phenomenon: Genesis and Development in North Eastern Region Nigeria". International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research. vol.1, no.1, March 2015, pp 1-22

<sup>27</sup> Perouse De Montclos, Marc Antoine. Ed. "The Message and Methods of Boko Haram". *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. vol. 2. 2014, pp 9-32

<sup>28</sup> See Bintube p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Perouse De Montclos, Marc Antoine. Ed. "The Message and Methods of Boko Haram". *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. vol. 2. 2014, pp 9-32

Due to their propagation with means of physical violence, the name of the group changed to Jama'at Ahl Sunnah Lid-Da'wati Wal Jihad. The implication of transformation was implied even from the change of the name of the group. This is because they believe the meaning of Jihad to include physical destruction and violence.<sup>30</sup>

With reference to relative deprivation theory of Ted Gurr<sup>31</sup>, "The potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity." (p.24). The theory can be applied to explain the transformation of Boko Haram into a violent sect. The difference of socioeconomic development between the Northern Nigeria and the South is obvious. The commercial capital of the country is located in the Southern Nigeria. The Southern Nigeria is also known as the oil-producing region. The development in many aspects is beyond comparison to the Northern part of the country. Northern Nigeria is considered the poorest part of the country<sup>32</sup>. This also contributed to underdevelopments in the region. They happen to lag behind in terms of education and lead in positions of poverty. At some point, it was recorded that the Northern Nigeria is 20% higher in illiteracy than the southern part of Nigeria<sup>33</sup>. The large number of youth with no means of income and no qualification of basic standard education to qualify them for jobs can be considered as a factor that frustrated them and led to the emergence of Boko Haram. The youth of the North are living in dire conditions, they had poor education and majority of them

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<sup>30</sup>Murtada, Ahmed. *Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities*. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

"Boko Haram Beheads 3 Government Spies". News and Politics, YouTube. Uploaded by Iratzs Micheal, 14 March, 2017. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8G-NrSXuqQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8G-NrSXuqQ) Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa, 16 March, 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Gurr, Ted. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1970.

<sup>32</sup> Campbell, John. "Why Nigeria's North-South Distinction is Important?" The Huffington Post. 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Ali-Akpajiak, Sofo C. A. and, Pyke, Toni. *Measuring Poverty in Nigeria*. Oxfam UK. 2003.

[books.google.com.eg/books?id=4scgLLqWHWEC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbg\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com.eg/books?id=4scgLLqWHWEC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbg_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

were not exposed to western education. Therefore, they were comfortable with Boko Haram's views on western education. Boko Haram needed an environment of ignorance to grow and the poor conditions of the north created such an environment for Boko Haram to emerge.<sup>34</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This research has selected four relevant works to be reviewed. Two written materials and two audiovisual materials. The written materials consist of one book and one article, while the videos are the primary sources recorded with Boko Haram leaders discussing on the topics related to this research.

The work titled "Boko Haram in Nigeria; Its Beginning, Principles and Activities" is the translated work of Dr. Ahmed Murtada. The book was originally written in Arabic and the author's target group was the Arabic speakers. (Murtada, Ahmed. Personal communication, December 1, 2016). He wanted to present the reality of the situation in Nigeria to the Arab countries and to deliver to them the real image of Boko Haram. The work was later translated into English, it is this translated version that the research will examine.

Dr. Murtada mentioned that the objective of the study is a comprehensive analysis of Boko Haram. He mentioned that evidences that were used by Boko Haram will be analyzed in order to have a clear understanding of the group. These evidences ranged from writings to statements by the leaders of the group from their broadcasts. This work highlighted that an

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<sup>34</sup> Bintube, Mustapha. "Boko Haram Phenomenon: Genesis and Development in North Eastern Region Nigeria". International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research. vol.1, no.1, March 2015, pp 1-22.



analysis of the primary sources as well as the sources used by Boko Haram was done to give a clear understanding of the group. However, after studying the work, it was challenging to trace some of the primary sources cited because the author used audio recordings on tapes and sometimes the citation was not specific<sup>35</sup>. For instance, the author will quote Muhammad Yusuf but he will not give reference to where he got the quotation.

The author highlighted the main principles of Boko Haram. He mentioned Boko Haram stated that in order to remove oppressive government, Sharia must be implemented through whatever means including armed conflict (P. 15). He explains that Boko Haram declares all those who participate in elections or in anything that has to do with democracy as disbelievers. The research done on Boko Haram, up until now, lacks in-depth analysis and thorough examination of the sources used by the group to legitimize their position. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by providing a close examination of the interpretations of the utilized sources used by Boko Haram in an attempt to offer a deeper understanding of their position.

Another principle discussed is the 'saved sect'. In this regard, Dr. Murtada only gave a brief explanation that Boko Haram believe that they are the only people on the right path. He mentioned that the reason they believe that is that they are reviving the spirit of Jihad in Nigeria. (P. 17). At this point, he did not mention any hadith, any verse, or any teaching of accepted scholar that is used by Boko Haram to justify the claim. It is only baseless claim of perfection because they believe they are perfect and that they are the only sect on the right path. Any other sect that is not on the same path with them is astray.

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<sup>35</sup> See Murtada Ahmed p. 20.

The third principle explained is the prohibition of western system of education (Boko) in Nigeria. The author mentioned that this principle was based on a number of reasons listed by Boko Haram. Some of these reasons are; that the missionaries and colonialist powers established it. Another reason is the system allows the mixing of genders in places of learning and for the wearing revealing clothing. For the second reason, he quoted a verse from the Quran that says “And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance” (Q:33, V:33)<sup>36</sup>. The third reason mentioned was the study of subjects, theories, and ideas that are in conflict with the teachings of Islam such as theory of evolution. A few other verses were quoted that Boko Haram use to justify their prohibition of western system of education. (P. 18). This work only listed the verses used by Boko Haram to justify their rulings against Boko but it did not attempt to examine Boko haram’s interpretations of such verses.

The fourth and last principle explained by Dr. Murtada was the prohibition of serving the Nigerian government. He mentioned that Boko Haram rejects any type of employment offered by the Nigerian government because they believe it is as though one is serving other than Allah. Here another verse was also quoted to justify the claim which is “And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have other than Allah any protectors; then you would not be helped” (Q; 11, V; 113)<sup>37</sup>. (P. 18). As mentioned earlier, this research only listed the sources used by Boko Haram to justify some of their doctrines. However, the research does not offer in-depth examination of the possible meanings of such verses.

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<sup>36</sup> This verse is written as translated in the work of Ahmed Murtada

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Further description on the methods and mechanisms of Boko Haram's preaching and propagation was tackled. Here, the author declared that the leaders of Boko Haram usually use three languages to give sermons and lectures. These are Hausa, Kanuri and Arabic. He summarized the methods of propagations into four aspects. The first aspect discussed was the formation of a state. In this case, he mentioned that Boko Haram sought a state that will be led by an Imam. They see Muhammad Yusuf as the Imam of the state and his deputy is Abu Bakr Shekau and a secretary general with the name Muhammad Nur. The group has representatives in different parts of the country who give reports on issues that are happening in their respective states. It has a parliament in which they discuss their issues and how to tackle them. He also mentioned that before the death of Muhammad Yusuf, he threatened the Nigerian government in one of his lectures that he has launched a battle with the Nigerian government. (P.19).

The second aspect focuses on the methods used by Boko Haram to develop their abilities. According to the author, Boko Haram practiced both spiritual and physical activities in order to improve their skills. They have mosques and centers in which they carry out their activities. One of their known centers was the center of Ibn Taimiyah located at Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. Their mosques were also places for spiritual activities like praying, schooling, reciting Qur'an, adhkar (supplications), fasting, night prayers, etc. Physical activities were also done in the mosques, for instance, archery, weight lifting, and shooting. They were encouraged by their leader to practice such activities even at their homes. They also did resistance training such as long distance walks from one local government to another. They prepared for their missions by carrying out military drills in the savannah desert. (P. 20).

The third aspect discussed was the group's educational curriculum, which focused on jihad and actions or deeds that nullifies iman (faith). Programs such as Quran, hadith memorization and lectures were held for adults and children at the group's center. (P.20). It can be argued that these activities were specifically designed to indoctrinate, manipulate and influence their followers. Proof of this was the systematic approach taken by Boko Haram leaders who spoke fluent Arabic but did not see it necessary to be taught to the followers even though the language is important in Islam. This could be a deliberate move, as they wanted their students to be exposed only to the leader's interpretations and to prevent the situations where the students would criticize or question the teachers' understanding or interpretations of the several texts written in Arabic and are being used in the learning centers.

Another method discussed was the academic sources of Boko Haram. Here the author mentioned few works that are being used by the group as their sources of reference. Among the main works he listed are *Lajna ad-Da'imah*; *Majmu al-fatawa* by Ibn Taimiyyah, *Tafseer of Ibn Katheer*, *al-Madaris al-Alamiyyah al-Ajnabiyyah* (Foreign International Schools) by Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd, *Madarikun Nadhar fis-Siyasah* (Perceptions of Viewing Politics) by Shaykh Abdul Malik ar-Ramadani al-Jaza'iri<sup>38</sup>, works of Ibn al-Qayyim, etcetera (Pp 21-22). The author only listed the works but did not mention the ideology extracted from these sources by Boko Haram. He also mentioned that the group always claimed they did not make up what they are saying or what they believe to be the right thing, rather they got it from previous scholars (P. 22).

Dr. Murtada pointed out the Impact of Boko Haram within and outside Nigeria. He stated that the activities of Boko Haram have given Islam a very different dimension that has

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<sup>38</sup> The transliterated works are written as provided in the work of Murtada.

given a very negative view to the religion within the country and the neighboring countries that are affected. He mentioned that the main board of the Muslim community in Nigeria, which is the Ahl As-Sunnah, tried advising the Boko Haram leaders but it was not sufficient. He also mentioned that the Nigerian security service was not doing much to counter the situation (P. 24).

It is important to note that the analysis of the emergence and history of Boko Haram done by Dr. Murtada was written in 2013. Further developments have occurred since then. Some of his findings may have changed due to continuous developments on the circumstances. However, this work is an important reference to certain issues discussed on Boko Haram such as the education curriculum of Boko Haram discussed above.

Another author, Dr. Mustapha Bintube wrote an article titled 'Boko Haram Phenomenon: Genesis and Development in North Eastern Region Nigeria'.

Dr. Bintube clarifies that the objective of the study was to analyze the genesis and development of students of Muhammad Yusuf and what made them the Boko Haram of today. He mentioned that the work concluded that the root causes of Boko Haram's crisis are ignorance, poverty and illiteracy. (P.1). The work of Dr. Bintube identified lack of knowledge as one of the main causes of Boko Haram's crisis. However, it did not go into details analyzing the sources of knowledge used by Boko Haram. He mentioned that Boko Haram was influenced by 13th century scholar Ibn Taimiyah's doctrines but did not go into the details of how Boko haram interpreted and understood ibn Taimiyah's doctrines. This creates a gap that needs to be filled by this research. This research intends to look deeper into such details of the knowledge

claimed by Boko Haram as their sources of interpretations of what they believe to be the right thing.

The article also provided surveys that covered many interviews showing different factors that are associated with Boko Haram's revolt. A high percentage of responses from the interviews showed that Boko Haram members were mostly masses and people that have passed through socio-politico crises such as crumbling family structures. Another factor explained was lack of social standard of control in Borno State. He mentioned that neither the government security agencies nor the traditional institutions could handle or contain Boko Haram, even though they have a long history of insurgencies (Pp 6-9). Moreover, on the political conditions that led to the appearance of Boko Haram crises, the author explained that most Boko Haram members were thugs used by politicians for their political campaigns but were deserted after elections since they could not continue to fund them. Poverty, political oppression and manipulation are the main factors that made some of the thugs in Nigeria join Boko Haram (Pp 9-12).

Dr. Bintube described the genesis and development of Boko Haram in Nigeria as follows; The negligence of the state, the corruption of the leaders and the injustice carried by the security personnel, are all reasons for deprivation and suffering among the people of Nigeria. Ignorance and illiteracy played a role; people are mostly poor and have little or no access to education. Muhammad Yusuf was successful in forming Boko Haram for such reasons because the environment provided a perfect target for him. He was able to manipulate people because they were in desperate conditions. He told the people the solution was Sharia government. (P.

13). His ideas and tactics appealed to the people since he was speaking of the dire reality they were living in.

Dr. Bintube described Boko Haram as a social problem whose genesis is lack of social structure in various aspects such as educational and economic structure. In terms of controlling the situation, he mentioned the government has failed. He listed the number of various attacks and killings that were done by the Boko Haram and the damage they did to humanity in general. He recommended the government should try other ways to understand the root causes of Boko Haram in order to help counter the situation.

Some videos presented by the Boko Haram members, emphasize that leadership under democratic government is not accepted. It is also unacceptable to serve under a democratic government or implement a western system of education. Since they emerged, Boko Haram has been emphasizing their ideology, through their sermons, debates, and lectures etcetera. One of their videos displayed an interview organized by the Darul Islam of Bauchi State Nigeria (Darul Islam of Bauchi state is an organization that organizes Islamic seminars and lectures in Nigeria.). They tackled the following topic, “The Status of Western Education and Government work in Nigeria”. The interview was in Hausa language to ask Muhammad Yusuf some questions regarding the preaching’s and sermons he gave on the views that western system of education is prohibited and civil service to Nigerian government is prohibited.

The interview with the title “muqabala malnIsaalibauchlda maln muhmmedyusuf maldugurl akankaratunboko haram 4” translated as “interview between Isa Ali Bauchi and Muhammad Yusuf on the topic of western education” on YouTube turned out to be a debate

between Muhammad Yusuf and Isa Aliyu fantami (is the interviewer and he is a known Islamic scholar in Nigeria). The former was debating against serving the government and western education (*Boko*) while the latter was debating for serving the government and getting a western education (*Boko*). In the debate, which was conducted in Hausa Language, Muhammad Yusuf argued that the acquiring of knowledge under the western system of education is not acceptable and can even be prohibited in Islam because nearly everything that has to do with western education opposes the teachings of Islam. He added that the intention of establishing the western schools was to destroy Islam. These schools were established to launch war against Islam by attacking the minds and hearts of Muslims. He supported some of his arguments by reading from books such as the book of Ibn Taimiyah titled “Alfurqan Bayna Awliya’ Arrahman wa Awliya’ Ashaitan”. However, he did not identify many of the books he was quoting from throughout the interview. In this debate, Muhammad Yusuf strongly opposed the Western system of education and the serving of the government. It is important to note that throughout the debate, Muhammad Yusuf actually did not answer directly some questions that were forwarded to him. For instance, every time the interviewer asks him to support his arguments directly from the Quran or Sunnah, he diverts the conversation to another issue. Sometimes he diverts the conversation by saying the question has nothing to do with the issue they are talking about at the moment. He kept going back to a point that studying theories such as Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution is contradictory to the teachings of Quran.

According to Muhammad Yusuf, working under secular Nigerian government is prohibited because it is not applying the teachings of Islam and can even lead to disbelief. For instance, he explains that a lawyer who is working in one of the secular courts of the country



shows obedience to the laws of the constitution of the country, which are not laws of Allah. The lawyers use terminologies such as 'my lord' or 'my worship', which he considers as acts of disbelief. He further added that working for the Sharia courts that are run by the Nigerian secular government is also not permissible because they do not apply Sharia and are run by a heretical government. At some points Muhammad Yusuf clearly pointed that some of his arguments are his own opinions that are concluded through his research and knowledge that he is convinced is the right thing. Muhammad Yusuf did not base his arguments solidly on the Quran and Sunnah, his arguments were baseless and he did not logically defend them. They were all tailored to meet his political ends.

As for his views on education, even though he was against the western system of education, yet he was not in opposition to all subjects and disciplines of the western system. He accepted for example medical studies; however, he did not accept Charles Darwin's theory of evolution that was a major requirement for studying medicine in Nigeria. He argues that what Charles Darwin said regarding the evolution is contradictory to the Quran. However, he failed to support his argument on the evolution theory from the Quran or Sunnah.

Muhammad Yusuf preached the above-discussed views on government and education, in mosques and lecture halls to large number of students and viewers. He had a large number of audience and followers who followed him blindly even without giving them any proof from the Quran and Sunnah to support his views and ideas. He misled his audience and was not honest to admit that these are his personal opinions.

Another video titled “Hazihi Aq. 3gp”<sup>39</sup> which was a lecture recorded by the Khairul Huda DVD and VCD collection, presented by Abubakr Shekau the successor of Muhammad Yusuf, in Kanuri language on 18<sup>th</sup> of Rabiul Awwal 1430 (15<sup>th</sup> of March 2009). In this lecture Abubakr Shekau discussed the issue of democracy, he was trying to prove that democracy is contradictory to Laws of Allah. Abubakr shekau basically mentioned that the Constitution of Nigeria is the law of unbelievers and Quran is the book of Allah and all those who do not follow the book of Allah are unbelievers. He made reference to a law book titled “How our Laws are made Laws”. He criticized the title of the book explaining that the title implied that man-made laws are used instead of the laws of Allah and that obedience to Allah is ranked second to obedience to man. He pointed that this is what democracy is presenting to people, to leave Allah’s laws and be governed by fabricated laws. In summary, he argued that democracy cannot be accepted. He also criticized the western system of education (Boko) claiming that the intentions behind it was to eradicate the true teachings of Islam and therefore it must be rejected.

Interestingly, Shekau, did not specify what parts were contradictory to the laws of Allah, in the books he was quoting. Based on this video, it can be argued that Boko Haram leaders did not support their arguments throughout their interviews and sermons; they are manipulative in delivering their message to their vulnerable audience who can easily fall into their trap.

The above videos show how from early stages Boko Haram carried out campaigns convincing some of their audience that democracy and Western system of education (Boko) is

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<sup>39</sup> This title is written as provided on YouTube and cannot be translated because it does not mean anything base on the way it was written

an obstacle to their religion. They managed to present their ideas in a manipulative manner. During this period, a big number of students dropped out of schools and universities. Even though there is no written evidence for the reasons for this high rate of drop-outs, yet it coincided with the time when Boko Haram were disseminating their ideas on western education.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE RISE OF BOKO HARAM AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

#### A. THE REIGN OF MAITATSINE.

Earlier studies have stressed the common similarities between Boko Haram and Maitatsine (this was a radical group that existed in northern Nigeria in the eighties),<sup>40</sup> going so far as to imply that Boko Haram is a continuation due to their similar ideology<sup>41</sup>. The Maitatsine reigned in Northern Nigeria in the 1980s, and was founded by Muhammad Marwa, also known as Maitasine<sup>42</sup>. Scholars believed Marwa to be originally from Cameroon, and settled in Kano, Northern Nigeria<sup>43</sup>. He was known as a Quranic teacher and a preacher who became influential and gathered a large number of followers.<sup>44</sup> At some point, he appeared to become deeply convinced by his teachings, to the extent that he even claimed to be a prophet. It was also reported that copies of the Quran were found in his house in Borno, had the prophet's name replaced with his

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<sup>40</sup> Adesoji, Abimbola O. "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and The Response of the Nigerian State." *Africa Today*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2011, pp. 99–119. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.57.4.99](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.57.4.99). Retrieved on 10 Sept. 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Kastfelt, Niels. "Rumours of Maitatsine: A Note on Political Culture in Northern Nigeria." *African Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 350, 1989, pp. 83–90. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/722600](http://www.jstor.org/stable/722600). Retrieved on 10 Sept. 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Hickey, Raymond. "The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria: A Note." *African Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 331, 1984, pp. 251–256. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/721562](http://www.jstor.org/stable/721562). Retrieved on 10 Sept. 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Kastfelt, Niels. "Rumours of Maitatsine: A Note on Political Culture in Northern Nigeria." *African Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 350, 1989, pp. 83–90. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/722600](http://www.jstor.org/stable/722600). Retrieved on 10 Sept. 2017.

own<sup>45</sup>. Maitatsine's controversial preaching resulted in his imprisonment and deportation but he later returned to Nigeria<sup>46</sup>.

When Maitatsine and his followers became established, they outlined doctrines. The basics of these doctrines are as follows: Rejection of westernization, rejection of government authority, and rejection of western education system. Maitatsine went to the extreme, rejecting even technology such as driving cars, wearing a watch or using any other sorts of technology. The Maitatsine also rejected the idea of sending children to schools and called the people that did as infidels<sup>47</sup>. An earlier study suggested that the group displayed their rejection of the government's authority<sup>48</sup>. In order to go further with their agenda, the group began using violence. Between November and December 1980, it was reported that Maitatsine supporters had grown violent in the Kano state, and the federal government had to intervene, which led to the death of several people and Marwa himself.<sup>49</sup> Rumors had it that the group was so violent that they mutilated the bodies of their victims by sucking their blood.<sup>50</sup>

However, the death of the group's founder did not stop the violence, which spread across Northern Nigeria throughout the early 1980s, beginning with riots in

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<sup>45</sup> Isichei, Elizabeth. "The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-85: A Revolt of the Disinherited." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1987, pp. 194–208. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1580874](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1580874) Retrieved on 19 Sept. 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Isichei, Elizabeth. "The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-85: A Revolt of the Disinherited." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1987, pp. 194–208. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1580874](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1580874) Retrieved on 19 Sept. 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Kastfelt, Niels. "Rumours of Maitatsine: A Note on Political Culture in Northern Nigeria." *African Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 350, 1989, pp. 83–90. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/722600](http://www.jstor.org/stable/722600). Retrieved on 20 Sept. 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Hiskett, Mervyn. "The Maitatsine Riots in Kano, 1980: An Assessment." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1987, pp. 209–223. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1580875](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1580875). Retrieved on 20 Sept. 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Kastfelt, Niels. "Rumours of Maitatsine: A Note on Political Culture in Northern Nigeria." *African Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 350, 1989, pp. 83–90. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/722600](http://www.jstor.org/stable/722600). Retrieved on 20 Sept. 2017.

October 1982 in Maiduguri<sup>51</sup> (the current capital of Borno state). Some studies highlighted that the riot was provoked by the police,<sup>52</sup> when they raided the area where the Maitatsine followers were dominant. This is believed to have begun as a clash, which claimed many lives between the police and the Maitatsine group. In the same year, the riots reached Kaduna state (one of the states in Northern Nigeria),<sup>53</sup> and by 1984 the riots occurred in Yola, the capital of today's Adamawa state<sup>54</sup> (another Northern state in Nigeria). In 1985, lives were also lost in the Gombe<sup>55</sup> and Bauchi<sup>56</sup> states, which are also located in the Northern part of Nigeria. The government succeeded in nearly eliminating the Maitatsine movement, which has not been heard of since 1985. However, the tradition of violent religious crisis in Northern Nigeria continues today as can be seen in Boko Haram.

## **B. THE EMERGENCE OF BOKO HARAM**

The exact date of when Boko Haram was founded is debated within literatures. Some studies implied that Boko Haram started as early as in the 1980s<sup>57</sup> (during the reign of Maitatsine), while another study mentioned that it was originated after the

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<sup>51</sup> Hiskett, Mervyn. "The Maitatsine Riots in Kano, 1980: An Assessment." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1987, pp. 209–223. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1580875](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1580875). Retrieved on 20 Sept. 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Hickey, Raymond. "The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria: A Note." *African Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 331, 1984, pp. 251–256. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/721562](http://www.jstor.org/stable/721562). Retrieved on 20 Sept. 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Adesoji, Abimbola O. "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and The Response of the Nigerian State." *Africa Today*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2011, pp. 99–119. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.57.4.99](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.57.4.99). Retrieved on 20 Sept. 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Isichei, Elizabeth. "The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-85: A Revolt of the Disinherited." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1987, pp. 194–208. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1580874](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1580874). Retrieved on 20 Sept. 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Adesoji, Abimbola O. "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and The Response of the Nigerian State." *Africa Today*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2011, pp. 99–119. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.57.4.99](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.57.4.99). Retrieved on 10 Oct. 2017.

establishment of the Sunni body in Nigeria known as “Izalatul Bidi’a Wa Iqamatus-Sunnah” in 1992<sup>58</sup>. There was disagreement within that organization, which subsequently splintered, and Muhammed Yusuf was one of the members who left the organization. He then emerged as leader of one of the factions that later evolved to Boko Haram. According to Bintube “it was to form his own interpretation of Islam as a social fact of deception to stage Jihad” (p2) in Nigeria. Yet another study stated that it developed as Lawan Abubkr’s “Sahaba” movement in 1995. Lawan Abubkr was the head of a group called Sahaba, but he later left Nigeria to Saudi Arabia for study, then Yusuf took over as the head<sup>59</sup>. Despite the controversies over origin of the group, there seems to be common agreement by many studies that Boko Haram began in 2002<sup>60</sup>. Andrew Walker described that in 2002, Boko Haram withdrew from the larger society to Kanama (a small village in the region of Yobe in Nigeria) to “set up a separatist community run on hardline Islamic principles and return to a life under “true” Islamic law, with the aim of making a more perfect society away from the corrupt establishment.” (p3).

By the year 2003, complaints of troubles reached the police from Kanama started by the Boko Haram, and there was report that some of the Boko Haram

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<sup>58</sup> Bintube, Mustapha. “Boko Haram Phenomenon: Genesis and Development in North Eastern Region Nigeria”. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*. vol.1, no.1, March 2015, pp 1-22

<sup>59</sup> Mantzikos, Ioannis. Ed. “What Do We Really Know About Boko Haram” *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*. e-International Relations. Bristol, UK. Oct. 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Walker, Andrew. “What is Boko Haram?” Washington DC. The United State Institute of Peace. 2012.

Murtada, Ahmed. *Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities*. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

Mantzikos, Ioannis. Ed. “What Do We Really Know About Boko Haram” *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*. e-International Relations. Bristol, UK. Oct. 2013.

members were killed extra judicially by the police<sup>61</sup>. This incident marked the beginning of Boko Haram's transformation to physically violent organization in retaliation to the incident. Since then, Boko Haram retaliated to almost every death of their members at the hands of police or military forces. In the early 2004, it was reported that Boko Haram attacked police stations in massive scales in response to the death of their members during the Kanama incident<sup>62</sup>. Besides retaliation, they also used any means necessary to further their agenda, which they claim is in the name of religion.

### C. THE TRANSFORMATION OF BOKO HARAM

Before the Kanama incident, Boko Haram usually attacked the society verbally to spread their ideology, as the true teachings of Islam. Muhammad Yusuf laid a strong foundation for his audience by using divine speech as his tool for mobilizing identity, it was easy for him to target and convince his audience. Coupled with the endemic poverty and the corruption in the country, his audience found his message comforting and believed he was someone who came to save them.

In July 2009, the police arrested and killed Muhammad Yusuf, which the police claim it was during a clash between the police and his followers.<sup>63</sup> Yusuf's death exemplified Nigerian Police's brutality and injustice<sup>64</sup>, which had also been suspected

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<sup>61</sup> Murtada, Ahmed. *Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities*. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Loimeier, Roman. "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria." *Africa Spectrum*, vol. 47, no. 2/3, 2012, pp. 137–155. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/23350455](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350455). Retrieved on 03 Oct. 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Maiangwa, Benjamin, et al. "'Baptism by Fire': Boko Haram and the Reign of Terror in Nigeria." *Africa Today*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2012, pp. 41–57. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.59.2.41](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.59.2.41). Retrieved on 04 Oct. 2017.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



after Kanama. After the death of Yusuf at the hands of security personnel, the members of the group decided to regroup and adopted more deadly tactics to attack their targets. A study mentioned that it was at that time that the group adopted the name Jama'at Ahl-i-Sunnah Li Da'wati Wa al-Jihad.<sup>65</sup> They also embraced traditional rebel attack methods such as shooting while driving on motorbikes, suicide bombings, kidnappings etcetera. Evidences were seen in the following accounts of the major attacks that took place.

In 2010, there were records of attacks on prisons in different states in the north, releasing of inmates that were mostly Boko Haram members<sup>66</sup>. The group also attacked police, military, state officials, and anyone—perceived as colluding with the Nigerian government against the group's activities. Among the major attacks in 2011 was the suicide bombing at the police headquarters in Abuja. Even though the attacker missed his target; however, two people died at the incident, the suicide bomber and one other person<sup>67</sup>. The attack was significant because Boko Haram has moved beyond Borno state to the capital of the country, which showed their growing power. This was the first major step up that triggered many attentions. Another attack that drew major attention that followed the above attack in the same year was the bombing of the United Nations building that brought the end of many lives. According to John Tully Gordon, this attack

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<sup>65</sup> Loimeier, Roman. "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria." *Africa Spectrum*, vol. 47, no. 2/3, 2012, pp. 137–155. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/23350455](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350455). Retrieved on 09 Oct. 2017.

<sup>66</sup> Maiangwa, Benjamin, et al. "'Baptism by Fire': Boko Haram and the Reign of Terror in Nigeria." *Africa Today*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2012, pp. 41–57. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.59.2.41](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.59.2.41). Retrieved on 09 Oct. 2017.

<sup>67</sup> Gordon, John Tully. "The Scourge of the Sahel: Examining the Rise of Boko Haram and Modern Violent Extremism In West Africa". Diss. Fordham University New York January, 2014.

was a demonstration of Boko Haram against any western influence in the country, not just limited to western education or western civilization (p44). The same year, there were also several other upsetting attacks simultaneously on churches on Christmas day in Madallah-Niger state, Jos the capital of Plateau state, Kano state and Damaturu the capital of Yobe state.<sup>68</sup> The methods of the attacks differed; some were shootings while driving, bombs drops, and some suicide bombings. However the attacks took place, they caused significant loss of lives and aggravated tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities.

The following year, 2012, also witnessed a series of attacks, with some against media stations<sup>69</sup> to demonstrate Boko Haram's anti-media sentiment towards any outlet that deems blasphemous to their ideology. Further attacks took place in the same year on places of worship, institutions, and public places throughout northern states. One of the most heart-breaking incidents happened the following year (2013) when a massacre took place in boarding schools in Yobe state. Children were shot dead, and some were gathered together with staff intentionally killed with explosive devices.<sup>70</sup> Abubakar Shekau proudly admitted committing these atrocities as part of their demonstration against Western education.<sup>71</sup> Another famous incident that was perpetrated by Boko Haram in their war against western education was the abduction of the Chibok girls. In

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<sup>68</sup> Gordon, John Tully. "The Scourge of the Sahel: Examining the Rise of Boko Haram and Modern Violent Extremism In West Africa". Diss. Fordham University New York January, 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

early 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped over 200 girls<sup>72</sup> from their school. Abubakr Shekau claimed responsibility of this action in a video posted on YouTube, where he mentioned *Boko is Haram* and the girls should not be in school, they should be married. He also claimed he would sell the girls as slaves.<sup>73</sup>

The list of Boko Haram attacks provided is not exhaustive, and continues to grow today. Since the death of their founder at the hands of the Nigerian police forces, there has been an obvious transformation within the group. The above listed attacks demonstrate Boko Haram's transformation from just verbal assaults to sophisticated and violent methods, such as explosives, shooting and kidnapping. These actions built up their confidence as they pursued their agenda. To understand their escalating violence and willingness to use force to achieve goals inspired by peaceful scriptures, the history of the organization's development is important.

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<sup>72</sup> "Nigeria says 219 girls in Boko Haram kidnapping still missing". Fox News. 26 June 2014. [www.foxnews.com/world/2014/06/23/nigeria-says-21-girls-in-boko-haram-kidnapping-still-missing.html](http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/06/23/nigeria-says-21-girls-in-boko-haram-kidnapping-still-missing.html) Retrieved 10 Oct. 2017.

<sup>73</sup> Shekau, Abubkr. "Boko Haram Leader Shekau Releases Video On Abduction Of Chibok Girls" Uploaded by Sahara TV. 05 May, 2014. YouTube. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrfWS\\_vL0D4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrfWS_vL0D4) Retrieved 10 Oct. 2017.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### THE METHODS AND STYLE OF PROPAGATION OF BOKO HARAM

#### A. THE METHODS OF PREACHING (*DA'WAH*)

Boko Haram has used preaching (*da'wah*) as one of the main tactics to spread their ideology. The several works of *da'wah* presented to Boko Haram's audiences helped in ways to improve the strength of the group. Methods of how these works were presented can be seen in the following examples. For instance, the use of specific languages in preaching at the early stage of the group was limited to three languages- Hausa, Kanuri, and Arabic. However, the Arabic was translated into either Hausa or Kanuri most of the time. The use of these languages has obviously limited Boko Haram's audience because not everyone understands these languages. Hausa is the common spoken language in the northern part of Nigeria, which is half or probably more of the population in the country. While Kanuri is spoken only in limited places in the northeast, but the Kanuri speaking people are the immediate community of the Boko Haram. Boko Haram never use English language in their works of *da'wah*. Even though it is the most common language everywhere in the country. If the intentions was to spread truly the message of Islam to the people of Nigeria, then English is the best option to be included and communicate to the people of the country.

The limiting of these languages appears to give sense of belonging and making the audience feel safe. This is because most of the audience do not speak or understand English language. However, the leaders of Boko Haram, especially Muhammad Yusuf,

spoke good English but they never use it in preaching or teaching. The idea of limiting the language may have helped in limiting and aiming the group's target audience. It gives room to captivate and mold the mindset of the audience. As for the Arabic language, the semantics remain within the interpretations of the leaders since they are the translators of what they are saying in Arabic.

Another method of *da'wah* used by the Boko Haram to get to their audience is affordability of getting access to their works. Leaders of Boko Haram have their services such as preaching or lectures recorded in different ways. They post on YouTube, record on disc plates, and in the past one of most affordable methods was recording the works on audio tape. Audio tape can serve a large audience, for example, one tape can be played for many people. This way the message can be transmitted widely at a low cost. When it is compared to YouTube posts, which require access to the internet (something the majority of Boko Haram members cannot afford), an audio tape needs very little technology and therefore can reach a wider audience.

Another interesting way that Boko Haram used was presentation of gifts at the places where they give services such as Mosques. An example of this was the weekly feast Muhammad Yusuf organized at his center where he would buy sheep and cows for his followers. At some point, he was said to have given other financial support that was more than his income.<sup>74</sup> . The majority of the people attending were desperate and struggling to survive for basic needs such as food. Therefore, when they were presented

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<sup>74</sup> Murtada, Ahmed. Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

with free food weekly at the Boko Haram learning centers, they encouraged friends and family members to attend these meetings. This idea made the audience's acceptance faster and easier to manipulate because of the kind gestures presented to them.

Mobility was another important aspect that facilitated the spread of the group's ideology. Boko Haram were known for preaching their ideology in many different locations across the northern part of the country. Sometimes they did not just wait for people to come; instead, they reached out to people by traveling to them. They travelled within northern Nigeria to give lectures and sermons. They also had representatives in most corners of northern Nigeria<sup>75</sup>, who indoctrinated people with the ideologies they presented. This allowed Boko Haram to travel to people who could not afford to travel to them.

Beside spiritual activities, the Boko Haram also held other social activities in their mosques to encourage people, especially youth, to be part of their agenda. Records have it that, they used to organize trainings such as martial arts, weight lifting, or long distance walks<sup>76</sup> to stay fit. They also did military drills in the desert such as shooting, archery and other forms of exercise. This way, they can encourage hyper-masculinity, especially among young men, which can lead them to engage in violent activities.

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<sup>75</sup> Murtada, Ahmed. Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginning, Principles and Activities. Trans. AbdulHaq al-Ashanti. Salaf Manhaj. 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

## B. THE STYLE AND METHODS OF TEACHING IDEOLOGY

Beside the key doctrines of Boko Haram that will be discussed in the next chapter, it is also important to point out other central religious narratives in order to understand the group. One of the most successful ways they indoctrinated their ideologies was through their educational programs and the way they portrayed their messages. It can be argued that the manipulation of the group into its current form had a lot to do with the methods they used to educate their followers. It is important to note that Boko Haram has a common area of focus in their studies. These education processes were not limited to schools only. In fact, it took place within their worship centers, through their lectures, and via their Friday sermons.

According to Ahmad Murtada, the group focused on works related to jihad and actions that nullified Iman [faith] (p20-21). The group instilled feelings of guilt in the minds of their audiences by listing numerous actions, which nullified Iman and then encourage them to work on reviving their faiths in ways such as jihad. An example of this can be seen in one of Muhammad Yusuf's lectures, on a topic titled "Guzurin Mujahidai," (translated as "Package for Jihadists") and posted on YouTube.<sup>77</sup> In this video, Muhammad Yusuf listed actions that confirmed a person's complete submission to Allah and ensured one as a believer in Allah. He clearly stated that these confirms a person's faith (Iman). These actions are as follows: making an effort to spend money or time in the path of Allah, fasting, late night prayers, loving another person for the sake of Allah, patience in terms of difficulties, patience in terms of avoiding what Allah has forbidden and patience in terms of obeying Allah. These are all beside the obligatory

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<sup>77</sup> Yusuf, Muhammad. "Guzurin Mujahidai.3pg" Education, YouTube. 28 Oct. 2011.  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWCNdqwGU-M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWCNdqwGU-M) Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa, Retrieved on 22 Oct. 2017.

duties of Islam. He clearly mentioned that jihadist succeeded when acting in this way, and one has no success in life otherwise. He also mentioned that in some cases, fasting is not only mentioned under the pillars of Islam, rather it is also under the topic of jihad. Interestingly, he also stated that these are actions he personally called the “the things the heart hates, the body dislikes acting on it, but Allah loves it.”<sup>78</sup> The inherent contradiction between actions, which the body dislikes, but which Allah requires be done must be noted. In order to clarify this confusion, he quoted verses from the Quran to convince his audience of the truth of his opinion. However, the important thing to observe is that in most cases, while quoting from the Quran, he chose passages from different chapters. This leads to two distinct counter-arguments to his approach to religion.

Firstly, he only used select passages from the Quran, which supported his personal opinion (“The things the heart hates, the body dislikes acting on it but Allah loves it”), rather than engaging with the entire scripture. Secondly, he interpreted these verses out of context, because he was uprooting verses from different chapters and placing them together to make a convincing point. This denies justice to the scripture because the meaning of those verses could be out of context. Another controversial point he made in the middle of the lecture was the examples he gave to explain ‘loving another person for the sake of Allah.’ He stated that Iman is not written on the face; rather it refers to concealed matters of the heart, which the companions of the Prophet would not have known if the Prophet did not mention it to them. The example he gave was that one of the companions of the Prophet lacked all the visible qualities of Iman, such as praying and fasting, but he never held a grudge in his heart. The rest

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<sup>78</sup> Yusuf, Muhammad. “Guzurin Mujahidai.3pg” Education, YouTube. 28 Oct. 2011.  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWCNdqwGU-M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWCNdqwGU-M) Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa, Retrieved on 22 Oct. 2017.



of the companions were surprised when the Prophet told them this companion is going to Jannah, because they had not seen him demonstrate outward signs of faith. The point to observe is that, Muhammad Yusuf's personal opinion contradicted some of what he mentioned. Since Iman is the matter of the heart, and no one can tell if it is there or not except Allah, then how could the actions listed above confirm a person's faith. His argument does not follow the story of the hadith he narrated, which emphasizes internal faith of external actions.

Another point that can be argued against Yusuf's approach is that he falsely equates jihad with faith. The title of the lecture was about preparation for jihad, but the content of the entire lecture emphasized Iman. It laid a groundwork for connecting jihad as a significant aspect of faith, as opposed to faith in Allah as the pillar of Islam. To do so, he misused Quranic verses to support his opinion that jihad was a significant aspect of Iman. For instance, Yusuf quoted some verses after saying that jihadist succeeded because of the elements he listed as confirmation of one's faith. Among the verses he quoted are: "...fear Allah so that you may be successful. And fear the fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers. Obey Allah and the messenger, so that you may be blessed. Race with one another towards forgiveness from your Lord...." (Q; 3:130-133).<sup>79</sup> These verses are related to *riba* (interest) and Allah was telling the believers not to be tempted of doing wrong and be cautious of Allah. The verses followed some narrations regarding battles that took place during the time of the Prophet, but it has nothing related to what Yusuf claimed to interpret. With such manipulations, Boko Haram can justify any act of jihad they carry out as legitimate Islam, after laying grounds by manipulating the Quran.

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<sup>79</sup> The Quran Chapter 3:130-133. Translated by Taqi Usmani. Quran Explorer. Noble Education Foundation, Inc 18 Nov. 2017. Vers. 2.4. Apple App Store, [itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8)

The above lecture also proves the narrative stated in the training manual developed by the Cairo Center for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa, for the workshop “Preventing Radicalization and Extremism Leading to Terrorism in Nigeria.” One of the most common arguments used by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram is that they are upholding specific Islamic values, such as *Tawhid* (monotheism), *Iman* (faith), and *Ihsan* (righteousness).<sup>80</sup> In this regard, they embody the values of the oneness of Allah and the significance of acting and doing righteousness to keep a person strong in faith. They portray these values to give people the impression their works are the ways to serve Islam. That way they get to justify their actions as Jihad for the defense of Islamic values. However, when the basis of their religious ideology is proven incorrect, they cannot justify their actions in this way.

Another common argument used by Boko Haram is ending oppression and humiliation of Muslims.<sup>81</sup> Through their lectures, the group presents to the people that the infidels, such as the Nigerian military and other security forces, harass and attack Islam. One example of such an argument is found in a Youtube lecture, entitled “Ku Koma Zuwa Ga Mahaliccin ku” which can be translated as “Return to your creator.”<sup>82</sup> The lecture, which was presented by both Muhamad Yusuf and Muhammad Nur (one of his deputies), discussed how deviating from the path of Allah causes oppression and humiliation from security forces, such as Operation Flush. Operation Flush is the name of a special security task force that consists of mobile police and military police located in Borno state with the intention of improving security.

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<sup>80</sup> “Preventing Radicalization and Extremism Leading to Terrorism in Nigeria” Cairo Center for Conflict resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa. 24-27 July 2016.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Nur, Muhammad and Yusuf, Muhammad. “Mohd Nur & Yusuf.3gp” Uploaded on 28 Oct. 2011. Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUot3BrT0FE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUot3BrT0FE) Retrieved on 23 Oct. 2017.

Security forces' infringement on citizen's rights and extra judicial actions paved way for the leaders of Boko Haram to claim that these abuses are the result of leaving the path of Allah. Muhammad Nur, the first speaker, started by talking about complete submission into Islam. He explained that the people of Borno state are in extreme suffering and torture caused by the Flush. This situation is due to failure of the people to submit completely to Allah. Submission requires both spiritual and physical elements. In the spiritual sense, it includes fasting and praying, while the physical sense consists of jihad. He specifically mentioned that one is not guaranteed of a share in the next world if they do not fight. He also emphasized the responsibility for a necessity to correct morally wrong activities such as Boko, democracy, and seeking refuge from anything other than Allah. Such wrong doings, in his terms, are to be fought by way of jihad. He also encouraged his audience with a reminder that the reward for fighting for the sake of Allah is certain, whether they win or lose the fight. He clearly stated that one of the ways to gain dignity is to perform jihad, as dignity comes only from Allah. When such actions are taken and people are returned to the way of Allah, then dignity will be restored.

Muhammad Yusuf, as the next speaker, did not say much but added a few explanations to what Muhammad Nur had said. He mentioned that oppression will continue to spread, because people know the truth but deny it. It will only stop when people return to *tawhid* and righteous deeds. He also made it clear that whatever Boko Haram does is for Allah to rescue the nation of the Prophet from such oppressions.

The above lecture exemplifies another element of Boko Haram's thinking. The *Takfir* (excommunication) of the Enemy<sup>83</sup> as non-Muslims or disbelievers have been repeated several times in the same lecture. Muhammad Nur, at some point, referred to the government, *Boko*, security forces, and people that participate in any of the previously listed as "*kafirai*," which can be translated as unbelievers. He also said that the above listed people practice Christianity in so many aspects; therefore, Boko Haram needs to save the rest of the people from disbelief, and make them return to the Quran and Sunnah. He further said one of the ways to return to the path of Allah includes jihad. In this way, Boko Haram's leaders try to give the impression that they are calling people to the only right path, which is the path of Allah.

Regarding the narratives on jihad, it can be noticed that jihad is pretty much mentioned in every aspect of Boko Haram's ideology. It can be seen in the presented lectures that jihad is talked about as a significant aspect of Islam. Moreover, jihad seems to find its way into every topic discussed. A particular lecture that was dedicated to jihad featured Muhammad Yusuf. The title was "Budaddiyar Wasika Zuwa Ga Gwamnatin Tarayyar Nigeria," which can be translated as "An Open Letter to the Federal Government of Nigeria."<sup>84</sup> The lecture intended to deliver a message to the Nigerian government that the group will not tolerate humiliation and harassment anymore; therefore, it was time for them to take a necessary step (this implied the use of physical violence). Muhammad Yusuf stated in the lecture that the government of Nigeria was built to destroy Islam. The government hated the *da'wah* (Boko Haram members) because they chose Allah and refused democracy, which is why the government was trying to

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<sup>83</sup> "Preventing Radicalization and Extremism Leading to Terrorism in Nigeria" Cairo Center for Conflict resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa. 24-27 July 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Yusuf, Muhammad. "waazin shekh muhammad yusuf maiduguri 1,2,3,4 and 5". YouTube. Uploaded by Muhammad Bakur, 17 Feb. 2011. Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa. Retrieved on 01 Nov. 2017.

stop them. However, he clearly stated that the organization would not tolerate any further humiliation or oppression, because they have completed their work of *da'wah*, and they have delivered the message of Islam. It is now time to face the infidels and defend their religion. Yusuf further encouraged his followers and told them they are ready for life or death, because they stand in the path of Allah. It is important to note that the lecture was organized immediately after a certain incident between the military forces and Boko Haram. The incident led to the death of some of their members, and many more were injured. Yusuf took advantage of the incident to instigate detestation for the government and encourage violence. There was tone of anger throughout the lecture and open threat directly addressed to the government. He also did not leave out Imams (Muslim leaders), because he called them hypocrites and claimed they are serving the government instead of Allah. In this lecture, Yusuf capitalizes on anger towards the government to call for violence in the name of the oppressed.

It is also important to note that all the discussed lectures were recorded during the early stages of development of Boko Haram. Muhammad Yusuf was still living and was building a theological ground for his followers. He incorporated the idea of jihad into the mentality of his audience, through lectures that selectively quoted religious scripture and called to mind the abuses of the Nigerian government. In this way, he built a mindset of jihad as justified. It is crucial to remember that Boko Haram has limited its study of Islam to a very small portion of the religion, as they mainly emphasize and focus on areas such as jihad and their confrontational stance towards authority and other religions based on their own interpretation of *tawhid*. The emphasis on these topics denies their followers the opportunity to learn a full, in-depth analysis of the religion in order to understand the larger picture.

### CHAPTER THREE:

#### THE ANALYSIS OF THE KEY DOCTRINES OF BOKO HARAM

The message of Boko Haram has emphasized on their basic doctrines, which are the prohibition of democracy, the prohibition of Western system of education (Boko) and prohibition of civil service under a democratic government. These particular doctrines are chosen out of others because they can play an important role in understanding the group's ideology. These doctrines are discussed base on the system of the Nigerian government. Previous researchers have not discussed these doctrines in much detail. This chapter attempts to go into details of these doctrines by analyzing the interpretations of the sources used by Boko Haram to justify the legitimacy of the doctrines.

##### A. THE PROHIBITION OF DEMOCRACY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF SHARIA

Boko Haram, on different occasions, portrayed democracy as a fabricated system that became an obstacle to Islam.<sup>85</sup> As previously discussed, they believe that Islam is not in its purest form and needs revival. They perceive that democracy is diluting the true teachings of Islam, and the constitution of Nigeria is the law created for infidels by infidels.<sup>86</sup> Such descriptions of democracy can be found in some of the lectures presented by the leaders of Boko Haram posted on YouTube.

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<sup>85</sup> Nur, Muhammad and Yusuf, Muhammad. "Mohd Nur & Yusuf.3gp" Uploaded on 28 Oct. 2011. Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUot3BrT0FE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUot3BrT0FE) Retrieved on 23 Oct. 2017.

Shekau, Abubakr. "Hazihi Aq.3gp". Education. YouTube, uploaded by mallam Muhammad Yusuf Nigeria, 28 Oct. 2011. Web. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jeowy05QfBw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jeowy05QfBw). Translated by Yakura M. Gana. Retrieved on 15 Dec. 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

One example is, Muhammad Yusuf's lecture posted on YouTube with unclear title. However, the content of the lecture discussed exhaustively about democracy.<sup>87</sup> Yusuf declared that the Nigerian government hates Allah and His Prophet and that is why the government refused to acknowledge the Sharia law. He mentioned that the government created and made written laws, which he referred to as the law of *jahiliyyah* (ignorance), which has become the constitution of the country. He believed such a government worships the nation and fabricated laws, as their obedience is to the constitution not to Allah. Thus, he called them idolaters. He stated that Allah's law is the only true government, spread through *da'wah*, which is what he claimed they are doing. He then quoted a portion of a verse from the Quran, saying "....There is no judgement but of Allah. He commanded not to worship anyone besides Him...."<sup>88</sup> Yusuf continued that worshiping Allah is not limited to *tawhid* (monotheism). Implementing Sharia throughout the country is also an important aspect of *tawhid*. He further encouraged his audience to be strong and remain focused, as it would enable them to challenge the Nigerian government. He threatened the government with destruction and stated that the government of Sharia will rise, because they are not afraid and ready to face death.

Further chanting of their bravery continued until the end of the lecture. At the end of the lecture, someone from the audience asked for explanation of the concept of *maslaha*, (*Maslaha* can be defined as "preservation of the objective of the law [Sharia], which consists of

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<sup>87</sup> Yusuf, Muhammad. "Film.3gp". YouTube, Uploaded on 28 Oct. 2011. Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xthVNq9OKD0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xthVNq9OKD0) Retrieved on 16 Nov. 2017.

<sup>88</sup> The Quran, Chapter 12: 40. English translation from [www.ahadees.com/ayat-40-surah-12.html](http://www.ahadees.com/ayat-40-surah-12.html). Retrieved on 19 Nov. 2017.

five things: the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property”).<sup>89</sup> Muhammad Yusuf responded that *maslaha* is rectification, which he explained as any decision that people will take towards progress not regression. He gave several examples to make his point clear; however, they differ from the definition he initially used. For example, he said if someone offers to use his shop as a mosque, and this may cause disagreement between people and can lead to loss of lives. However, there is another option of having the mosque in another place that will not cause any disagreement, and there will be no loss of lives. Therefore, the best option is to go for the second choice. This was his explanation of *maslaha*: the decision, which maximizes benefit without causing problems in the community. He further explained that *maslaha* does not apply in every situation such as *shirk* (polytheism). For example, he said accepting the government of Nigeria is *mafsada* (devastation), while eradicating it is *maslaha*. He believed that the origin of the Nigerian government is *shirk*; therefore, *maslaha* does not apply to decisions on whether to operate within the government structure. He also said that some people believe accepting the Nigerian government is *maslaha*, but he believes this conceptualization of *maslaha* is hypocritical. He said *maslaha* is the language of the Quran and Hadith and not anybody is eligible to translate it. He argued that when the hypocrites tried to define it, Allah says

“And when it is said to them, ‘Do not cause corruption on the earth,’ they say, ‘We are but reformers.’ Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive [it] not,”

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<sup>89</sup> Ramadan, Tariq “Al Maslaha (The Common Good)” *Islam and Life Weekly*. Web. 26 Jan. 2016. [tariqramadan.com/english/al-maslaha-the-common-good/](http://tariqramadan.com/english/al-maslaha-the-common-good/). Retrieved on 19 Nov. 2017.



and “And do not obey the order of the transgressors. Who cause corruption in the land and do not amend.”<sup>90</sup>

Muhammad Yusuf quoted these verses in sequence.

Based on the above, the lecture presented by Muhammad Yusuf can be disputed even without conducting a thorough study of the verses. Muhammad Yusuf’s interpretations of the verses he quoted to support his claim have been misused and manipulated. For instance, he quoted from Chapter 12 of the Quran, when talking about eradicating a false government of idolaters, which was referring to something contrary to what Yusuf had claimed. When one reads the entire chapter, it is quite clear that the verse talks about believing in Allah. It contains preaching from Prophet Yusuf (AS) to believe in Allah and His might. Muhammad Yusuf used this verse to make a political rather than spiritual point, which is clearly not intended by the text. Yusuf used the verse to point out the necessity of eradicating a government that does not believe in Allah, which was another contradiction to the verse. The chapter narrates Prophet Yusuf’s preaching about Allah under the government that does not believe in Allah. In such a situation, Prophet Yusuf decidedly does not call for violence. Furthermore, Prophet Yusuf also participated as Minister of Finance to improve the same government. This contradicts Muhammad Yusuf’s point, because rather than attack such a government, Prophet Yusuf worked to improve it. This shows he manipulated the verse (Q12:40) and gave it a meaning out of context.

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<sup>90</sup> The Quran chapter 2: 11-12, and chapter 26: 151-152. English translation from [quran.com/2/11-12#](http://quran.com/2/11-12#) Retrieved on 21 Nov. 2017.

The verses quoted at the end of the lecture justifying his definition of *maslaha* use the same flawed logic. Notably, Yusuf quoted the verses at the same time, without indicating that they are from separate chapters. He quoted four verses, two each from different chapters of the Quran. The first two verses are from the second chapter of the Quran (Surat-al- Baqarah) while the last two were from the twenty-sixth chapter (Surat-as-Shu'ara). When the entire second chapter is studied, it can be argued that it is clear that the verses Yusuf quoted were not a response to the hypocrites that defined *maslaha*, as he claimed. The verses were referring to hypocrites but addressed particular hypocrites that existed at the time of the Prophet in Madinah.<sup>91</sup> The topic of discussion in the verses also has nothing related to Yusuf's definition or idea of *maslaha*. It was actually a warning that pointed out to the Prophet to be aware of some people around him who pretended to believe in Allah. He used a verse about protecting the Prophet from false believers in order to justify violence, which is not the context.

The rest of the verses from the twenty-sixth chapter can also be analyzed in the same way. The verses narrate the story of Prophet Salih. He invited his people to believe in Allah and worship Him alone, and not to follow the transgressors that cause corruption in the land. The message of the verses was nothing close to *maslaha* or hypocrites; instead, it was an invitation to believe in Allah. Studying the chapter in its entirety shows other stories narrated to the Prophet about previous Prophets who were rejected by their people; therefore, he should not grieve if some people do not accept him. The consequences are left to Allah, not for him to worry. With these explanations, it can be seen that Muhammad Yusuf placed these verses in the wrong place to manipulate their meanings just to make his opinion acceptable. It is clear

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<sup>91</sup> Ali, Nouman Khan. Quran; A Deeper Look. Baqarah, Bayyinah Tv. Bayyinah LLC. 2017. Vers.1.4.0. *Apple App Store*, [itunes.apple.com/us/app/bayyinah-tv/id1210180887?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bayyinah-tv/id1210180887?mt=8)

that even the Prophet is encouraged to do his part and leave the rest to Allah. However, Yusuf is doing the opposite by trying to impose his ideology on people and depict unnecessary ideas as central to the religion.

Another important point to observe is that Yusuf said not anybody is qualified to translate the meaning of *maslaha*. However, he is confident his translation is one of the translations that is eligible. Since he regarded other translations that did not coincide with his opinion as hypocritical, this shows he prioritized his views over others. Furthermore, his definition and example of *maslaha* did not match his point of argument regarding eradicating false government. He explained *maslaha* as the choice of decision taken for progress not regression. He gave example that in order to protect life, choosing the second option for building the mosque is preferable. At the same time, he said eradicating the government of Nigeria, even if countless lives will be lost is the act of *maslaha*. It is clear, within his definition, preserving life is not a priority, which is absolutely regression and brutality not progress.

The above lecture of Muhammad Yusuf presents clear examples of how he manipulated verses of the Quran in a very deceitful manner. When carefully observed, the verses appear to suit his argument, but when given a closer look, it is clear that the verses have a different meaning in their full context. It is also important to note that even if general lessons can be derived from the verses, it still does not relate to the issue he claimed they are talking about.

Beside the use of verses from the Quran, Boko Haram regards works of Islamic scholars for evidence to justify their approach. As mentioned in the introduction, one specific scholar was chosen for this research. Boko Haram mentions or quotes Ibn Taimiyah on several

occasions to justify their arguments. One of these arguments is rejection of democracy. They believe the works of Ibn Taimiyah prove the rejection of democracy. An example can be seen in the video posted on YouTube featuring Abubakr Shekau speaking on democracy and Western education (Boko).<sup>92</sup> Shekau explicitly states that they are fighting the Nigerian government. He criticizes the national anthem and the national pledge, translating them to his audience to show how people worship the country. He holds that all the pledges and anthems should be to Allah, not to the government.

Shekau quoted different scholars in this lecture to justify his claim on prohibition of democracy. However, it is important to bear in mind that, sometimes, he did not always identify the scholars or their works. For instance, he will just give a name without indicating if it is a first or last name. In another instance, he will only quote the scholar without mentioning the literature. To avoid mistaking the scholars, the research only mentioned some of them as he stated without further information about them. This made it challenging to trace back the scholars or their works for better analysis. Moreover, the scholar specified for this research is Ibn Taimiyah who happened to be mentioned in this lecture.

Among the scholars Shekau listed, he claimed that Ibn al-Uthaymeen (an Islamic scholar) said that, democracy is the *madhab* (way) of infidels and it is *shirk* and staying under the government, which does not follow the way of Allah, is infidelity.<sup>93</sup> In a democracy, the formulation of laws depends on the will of the people, whether or not their choices contradict the way of Allah, which is what Boko Haram believe and does not accept this mode of

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<sup>92</sup> Shekau, Abubakr. "3gp. أبو بكر شيكو". Uploaded by Mallam Abubakr Shekau 28 Oct. 2011. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU). Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa. 22 Nov. 2017.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

governance. Shekau also said people that participate in democracy or anything that has to do with it are all infidels. He further stated even assisting or complementing the government makes one an infidel. He claimed another scholar (Sa'eed Abd-ul-Adheem) said democracy is a religion to those who belong to it and they want to impose it on Muslims.<sup>94</sup> He also claimed that al-Qayyim (751/1350)<sup>95</sup> condemned Imams that support corrupt governments and stated such Imams lead false *da'wah*. It is interesting to note that after Shekau quoted al-Qayyim, he then stated that al-Qayyim lived 700 years ago. Shekau's aim was to show how they refer back to recognized and respected scholars of Islam. However, his statement did not coincide with his point of argument to justify prohibiting democracy; firstly, his quotation of al-Qayyim only condemned corrupt government and did not mention democratic government. Secondly, democracy is estimated to have been established slightly above 350 years ago.<sup>96</sup> This is over three centuries after the death of Ibn Qayyim. With this in mind, Boko Haram claim it is not their own sayings rather, it is the sayings of previous scholars, while it is obvious some of their claims never existed during the time of such scholars. It is worth mentioning that Ibn Qayyim was known to be the closest disciple of Ibn Taimiyah.<sup>97</sup> He was said to have "defended, popularized and propagated the views of Ibn Taimiyah" (Leaman, 287). This explains the acceptance of his work by Boko Haram.

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<sup>94</sup>Shekau, Abubakr. "3gp. أبو بكر شيكو". Uploaded by Mallam Abubakr Shekau 28 Oct. 2011.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU). Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa. 22 Nov. 2017.

<sup>95</sup> Leaman, Oliver. The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy. Thoemmes Continuum, New York; London, 2006.

<sup>96</sup> See this link for the history of democracy.

[www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=2648&HistoryID=ac42&gtrack=pthc](http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=2648&HistoryID=ac42&gtrack=pthc) Retrieved on 11 Dec. 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Leaman, Oliver. The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy. Thoemmes Continuum, New York; London, 2006.

Among other scholars referred to by Shekau, Ibn Taimiyah is one of the most frequently mentioned. Shekau claimed that Ibn Taimiyah found reporting an issue or filing a case to a court under the constitution is *shirk*, and no condition permits an act of *shirk*. It is important to note he did not quote Ibn Taimiyah rather he only said Ibn Taimiyah said so. He quoted part of 191<sup>st</sup> verse of Surah al-Baqarah “...as *fitnah* (to create disorder) is more severe than killing...”<sup>98</sup> Shekau justifies Boko Haram’s violent ways because even killing is less dangerous than obeying an infidel government and creating *fitnah* in the country.

One of the criticisms regarding this lecture as pointed out earlier is Shekau’s lack of specificity. Though he sometimes mentioned the title of the scholarly work he discusses, however, he did not cite where he claimed Ibn Taimiyah said that obeying the constitution is *shirk*. After studying several videos featuring Boko Haram members presenting their lectures, this can be seen as a common method for misdirecting their audience. They mention Ibn Taimiyah as their source of information, but in most cases do not specify which work of Ibn Taimiyah contains what they claim. This prevents listeners from knowing the context of what Ibn Taimiyah said, and it is challenging to trace back the work for better analysis. Shekau claimed that democracy is *shirk*, and filing a case to a court is *shirk*, even though he was not specific about why. The obvious explanation is because it runs under a democratic government. To justify his explanation, he relied on the above Quranic quote. Contrary to what Shekau claimed, the verse talks about a specific incident that took place when Allah told the Muslims that migrated to Madinah to fight for Makkah and get it back, as it rightly belongs to them and they had been unjustly expelled. At that moment, the necessity to liberate the legacy of Islam

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<sup>98</sup> The Quran Chapter 2:191. Translated by Taqi Usmani. Quran Explorer. Noble Education Foundation, Inc 18 Nov. 2017. Vers. 2.4. Apple App Store, [itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8)

required cleansing *ka'bah* (the Sacred Mosque in Makkah) of idols and idolaters. According to Nouman Ali Khan, noted contemporary Islamic scholar, the word '*fitnah*' in that verse means *shirk*, which specifically refers to idolaters' acts of desecration at the *Ka'bah*. This was the command of Allah specifically to the Muslims to clear the corruption around *Ka'bah*. After that was done, then *fitnah*, in the context of the verse, was wiped out.<sup>99</sup> These explanations highlight that Shekau provided a false interpretation to the meaning of the verse. Though *shirk* was part of the meaning of the verse; however, the message of the verse was to liberate *Ka'bah*. It is not related to the prohibition of filing a case under non-Islamic governments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This shows an example of intentional misuse of Quranic verses by the Boko Haram.

## **B. THE PROHIBITION OF WESTERN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION (*BOKO*)**

The concept of Western system of education, according to Boko Haram, was something that occupied the hearts of people with thoughts that Allah does not approve. They claim it destroys the Muslim way of life by presenting teachings contrary to that of the Prophet. They believe the intention behind the establishment of *Boko* was for the British colonial power to dominate Nigeria through Christianity. For such reasons they rank *Boko* as *haram*. In addition to its association with colonial domination, *Boko* is *haram* because they teach topics that contradict the Quran. Examples of these claims can be traced back to the famous interview of Muhammad Yusuf posted on YouTube and entitled "muqabalamaln Isaali bauchi damaln mahammadyauf malduguri akankaratunboko haram 6." Translated as (interview between Isa

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<sup>99</sup> Ali, Nouman Khan. Quran; A Deeper Look. Baqarah, Ep069. Bayyinah Tv. Bayyinah LLC. 2017. Vers.1.4.0. *Apple App Store*, [itunes.apple.com/us/app/bayyinah-tv/id1210180887?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bayyinah-tv/id1210180887?mt=8)

Ali Bauchi and Muhammad Yusuf on the topic of Western education).<sup>100</sup> The topic of discussion in the interview was the status of *Boko* and serving under the Nigerian government.

In the interview, Muhammad Yusuf provided his rationale for why *Boko* is *haram*. He quoted a Hadith that says “The Prophet said when the people of the book present anything to you, if it contradicts the Quran, then reject it, if it does not, then accept it and if the Quran is silent about it, then you have the choice to accept or reject it.” With this hadith, Yusuf argued that *Boko* presents things that contradict the Quran; therefore, it is necessary to reject it. He gave examples of things that contradict the Quran, such as study of time scale (the idea of describing the timing and relationships of events that have occurred during Earth’s history) used by scientists in the field of geography. He said the concept of time scale contradicts the following verses of the Quran:

Say, ‘Do you really disbelieve in the One who has created the earth in two days, and ascribe to Him partners? That is the Lord of the worlds. He placed firm mountains in it (the earth) towering above it, and put blessings in it and proportioned its foods therein, in four days, equal for those who ask.’<sup>101</sup>

Yusuf further stated that Darwinism (a theory developed by Charles Darwin that species originate by descent, with variation, from parent forms, through the natural selection of those

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<sup>100</sup> “muqabala malnIsaalibauchIda maln muhmedyusuf maldugurl akankaratunboko haram 1-10”. People and Blogs. YouTube, uploaded by Muhammad Bakur, 22 Jan 2011. Web. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_UVaYu3dIA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_UVaYu3dIA) Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa, 28 Nov. 2017.

<sup>101</sup> The Quran Chapter 41:9-10. Translated by Taqi Usmani. Quran Explorer. Noble Education Foundation, Inc 18 Nov. 2017. Vers. 2.4. *Apple App Store*, [itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8)



individuals best adapted for the reproductive success of their kind)<sup>102</sup> contradicts the verses of the Quran that says, “We have created man from an extract of clay. Then We made him a sperm-drop in a firm resting place.”<sup>103</sup> Yusuf further claimed that learning the law of conservation of energy (energy can neither be created nor destroyed) is contrary to Islam,<sup>104</sup> because the definition is like the description of Allah, who is neither created nor does He have an ending. He mentioned Ibn Taimiyah’s work, *The Criterion Between the Allies of the Merciful and the Allies of the Devil*, and said the fallacy of the law of energy conservation is similar to specific Sufi approach to religion. Sufis are members of a Muslim group of people who try to experience God directly especially by praying and meditating, and claim they feel Allah during their *kashf* (unveiling).<sup>105</sup> According to Yusuf, Ibn Taimiyah said such people are the same as the Sufis and philosophers that believe there is no God, and He did not create the world. Yusuf also condemned teaching topics such as the nine planets of the solar system, because as the planets’ names originated from idols, it promotes idolatry. However, he admitted that the Quran is silent about this last point, but he opposes learning such topics. Moreover, he did not give any evidence that cited the names of the planets are originated from idols.

Based on the above claims, Muhammad Yusuf made his rulings and concluded that the Western system of education presented across schools in Nigeria is *haram*. He established this doctrine on the above-mentioned grounds. It is important to bear in mind that Yusuf has never

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<sup>102</sup> "Darwinism". Def.1. Dictionary.com Unabridged. Random House, Inc. Retrieved on 29 Nov. 2017. <Dictionary.com [www.dictionary.com/browse/darwinistic](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/darwinistic)>.

<sup>103</sup> The Quran Chapter 23:12-13. Translated by Taqi Usmani. Quran Explorer. Noble Education Foundation, Inc 18 Nov. 2017. Vers. 2.4. *Apple App Store*, [itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8)

<sup>104</sup> “Law of conservation of energy” Web. Retrieved on 29 Nov. 2017. [examples.yourdictionary.com/law-of-conservation-of-energy-examples.html](http://examples.yourdictionary.com/law-of-conservation-of-energy-examples.html)

<sup>105</sup> Webster, Merriam. "Sufi." Merriam-Webster.com. ND. [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Sufi](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Sufi) Retrieved on. 3 Dec. 2017.

been through even the elementary level of a Western system of education, which he admitted in the video.<sup>106</sup> Thus, he argued and established judgment over a topic on which he has no background knowledge. He disregarded and argued that time scale contradicts the Verses 9 and 10 of the 41<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Quran. The assumption here is that Yusuf derived a general lesson from these verses, which may suit his argument in a way. If so be the case, then Yusuf contradicted himself with the Hadith he quoted at the beginning of the argument that said one has the option of rejecting what contradicts his faith, accepting what is not in contradiction, and accepting or rejecting what is silent about it. He clearly focused only on the option of rejection. This shows that Yusuf only took part of that Hadith that helps his argument and gave no context. It is obvious the remaining part of the Hadith does not apply for him since he cannot prove that everything about geography contradicts the religion. Moreover, the message of the verses in the chapter is not about the time scale of the existence of earth, rather it is appreciating the Might of Allah through appreciating the might of His creation. It was a message to those falsely associating partners with Allah, and Allah responded by telling them to look around them and think, how can they disbelieve such Might?

The verses quoted regarding Darwinism are from the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Quran. The verses describe the stages of creation of life. The passage about the creation of man in the chapter was to prove that Allah is the designer of humankind. It was a message to the disbelievers to consider the message of the Prophet by observing their own creation. This was another way for them to come to believe in Allah. As much as these verses contradict Charles

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<sup>106</sup> "muqabala malnIsaalibauchIda maln muhmmedyusuf maldugurl akankaratunboko haram 5". People and Blogs. YouTube, uploaded by Muhammad Bakur, 22 Jan 2011. Web. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_UVaYu3dIA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_UVaYu3dIA)  
Translated by Aisha M. Iyawa, 28 Nov. 2017.

Darwin's theory of evolution, however they still do not give ground to rule the entire means of acquiring knowledge as *haram*. These are just topics discussed under subjects studied in school. The fact that they contradict some teachings in Islam, Yusuf missed the point by not understanding how having this knowledge will not affect the faith of an individual who believes in Allah and has the option of rejecting what is contradicting his faith and choosing what is beneficial to him.

Yusuf's third argument rebutted the law of conservation of energy. He believed this law is like the description of Allah, and therefore improper for Muslims to learn. Yusuf interpreted what Ibn Taimiyah said regarding Sufis and philosophers and concluded it is the same thing as law of conservation of energy. It is important to note that he did not quote Ibn Taimiyah directly; rather, he gave his opinion on Ibn Taimiyah's thoughts regarding the issue.

The work of Ibn Taimiyah was clear that he described Sufism and philosophers as deviants from the path of knowledge and deviants from the leader of the Quran and Sunnah (i. e. Prophet Muhammad) (P. 69). Moreover, Ibn Taimiyah did not condemn all Sufis as people who do not believe in Allah, for he was specific that some Sufis such as Ibn Sina and Ibn Arabi claimed they have the same relationship the Prophet (Muhammad) had in his closeness to Allah. He also viewed their perception of theology is the same as that of philosophers (such as Aristotle and Plato) that believe in atheistic philosophy (P.64). He described this as contradiction and corruption of the truth. This is because he believed they contrived their ideas and mixed it with the message of the Prophet Muhammad (P. 65). He said they believed to be allies of Allah and that the allies of Allah are superior to the Prophet of Allah since they receive from Allah without intermediary (P. 68). Ibn Taimiyah described these people as those who

totally reject the foundation of faith in Islam (P.70). He said their thinking led to the negation of the Creator and disbelief in His existence (P. 75). An analysis of Ibn Taimiyah's work shows nothing that relates to the concept of 'law of conservation of energy' as Muhammad Yusuf claimed; rather, this was Yusuf's own self-serving interpretation of what he believed to be in the work. It is evident that Ibn Taimiyah wrote about some Sufis and philosophers; however, his views on them did not accord to the claim of Muhammad Yusuf. It is also important to bear in mind that Yusuf said the law of conservation of energy is like the description of Allah. In this case, it means Yusuf may have viewed it to be the same with Allah, not claiming that there is no Allah as Ibn Taimiyah's work showed in his description of Sufis. This shows that either Yusuf is contradicting himself or he has no understanding of the definition of the law of conservation of energy, which is the likely case.

In addition to the above explanation, it is worth mentioning the similar approach of Boko Haram that echoed from the work of Ibn Taimiyah that was cited earlier. Ibn Taimiyah described and categorized whom he portrayed to be the friends of Allah as well as the friends of the devil. He labeled who was an unbeliever and who was not (P 64). This approach tend to be a common attitude of Boko Haram throughout their broadcast. Boko Haram do not differentiate what is blasphemous and what is not in line with their views. They categorize anything or person that does not follow their ideology as *haram* or disbelievers. The excommunication (*takfir*) of individuals as disbelievers was discussed in the previous chapter. However, it is important to note that the work of Ibn Taimiyah did not encourage violence. He simply criticized what he disapproved and gave his opinion but never instigated or even encouraged violence.

As pointed out earlier, Muhammad Yusuf concluded *Boko* as *haram* from simple definitions of some scientific theories (i.e. time scale, Darwinism and law of conservation of energy) without having full knowledge of the concepts. Importantly, Muhamad Yusuf never went to *Boko*, so he is not qualified to give rulings regarding these fields. It is interesting to note he admitted that studying to get to the level of professions such as medical doctors, engineers, or even teaching language could be acceptable. However, he failed to see that before reaching those levels, one must study the same concepts he ruled out as *haram*. Yusuf managed to convince some of his audience that are ignorant regarding *Boko*, with his limited knowledge. He used the Quran and Islamic scholars as his tools to facilitate the view that *Boko* is blasphemous to the religion of Islam.

### **C. THE PROHIBITION OF CIVIL SERVICE UNDER A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT**

Boko Haram's argument that being a civil servant under the constitution of Nigeria is *haram* relies on the same flawed logic as the previous topics discussed. This is because they regard anything under the government to be *haram*. However, they did not tend to condemn all civil services as stated earlier, because they believe some professions are beneficial to people despite the fact they operate under democratic rule. However, they tend to see no benefit to other professions and specifically criticize military forces, police personnel and lawyers. They condemn lawyers for using the constitution as a source of law and called it an act of *shirk*. They believe some acts of lawyers, such as referring to the judge as my lord, consists of another act of *shirk*. Muhammad Yusuf specifically mentions it is *haram* in the lecture discussed

above. He is of the view that having the Mace, as symbol of authority in the national assembly, is absolute idolatry and *shirk*. Boko Haram calls the senators and house representatives' infidels. They desire to wipe out the senators and replace them with a *shura* (consultative) council according to their perspective of Sharia. Such claims can be traced back to their lectures discussed throughout the previous sections. It is important to bear in mind that they did not mention any verse or scholar to justify this view in any of the video clips presented for this research. However, Ahmed Murtada suggested that they justify the prohibition of civil service because:

“...they reject employment under democratic Nigerian government...and regard it as total obedience to a disbelieving system while Allah says ‘and do not incline towards the wrongdoers, lest the fire should catch you and you have no supporters other than Allah, then you should not be helped.’”(Q; 11: 113)<sup>107</sup>. (P 18).

It is clear the message of this verse is not related to working for un-Islamic governments neither is it a justification for forbidding working for un-Islamic authorities. This verse, as stated in the Quran, follows long narrations of messengers' stories before the Prophet on how the disbelievers were destroyed, and it is advice to the believers not to follow the same ways of the previous transgressors or they shall await their punishment. This verse is not talking about government but people in general. It shows the Boko Haram's opinion on the verse was their own view of what they portray to be the government within the limits of their doctrines. In addition, Boko Haram is preaching regarding working under an un-Islamic government contradicts the example in Surah Yusuf, which shows Prophet Yusuf served as the Minister of

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<sup>107</sup> The verse here is written as it was translated in the work of Ahmed Murtad.

Finance under a non-Islamic government.<sup>108</sup> The stories of Prophets are narrated throughout the Quran for guidance and examples to those who believe as source of guidance to way of life. If any example would be considered, what could be better than those presented in the Quran? However, Muhammad Yusuf portrayed that personal opinions and false interpretations are better sources of guidance.

In summary, the thesis has argued that Boko Haram emerged as a non-violent group and later erupted and became violent. The transformation was triggered by poor economy and corrupted environment that facilitated the development. The thesis presented different examples of their lectures and sermons that illuminated the primary voice of their area of focus in study. It showed they limited their study specifically to their basic doctrines and manipulated their knowledge of religion to meet their end goals. Attacking the government with high tone of anger and giving hate speech that promoted violence was almost throughout their broadcast. The findings of this research enhance our understanding of Boko Haram in a different perspective from the usual political approach.

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<sup>108</sup> The Quran. Chapter 12. Translated by Taqi Usmani. Quran Explorer. Noble Education Foundation, Inc 18 Nov. 2017. Vers. 2.4. *Apple App Store*, [itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/quran-explorer/id451133186?mt=8)

## CONCLUTIOIN AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSION

Hearing the voices of Boko Haram's religious leadership themselves presents a better view of their interpretations and understanding of Islam. It cannot be disputed that the leaders of Boko Haram have knowledge of Islam; however, it can be argued that what they present as their understanding of religion is a misuse of their sources of knowledge that negatively affects the religion of Islam. The unfortunate followers, who blindly believe them, are nothing more but the creation of their leaders. It tells more about how ignorant they are about Islam besides what they have learned from Boko Haram.

Boko Haram believes the government of Nigeria has failed them through its corruption, injustice, and violation of rights. This gives them a reason to declare it to be Haram, for it presented not much of a benefit to them. The Western system of education (*Boko*) is something their leaders have not experienced directly<sup>109</sup>. In addition, most of the followers with a poor background cannot afford this formal education, which provides another good reason to reject it in their agenda. Since they have no knowledge or background to qualify for a sufficient employment in the society, supporting a government that does not recognize or assist them made no sense. It is obvious these three points make a perfect argument for the leaders of Boko Haram to present to their audience for easy recruits into the group. With the idea that they have been sidelined and deprived of their rights in the society, they build their own identity through creating their doctrines and gained recognition from desperate people like

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<sup>109</sup> Both Muhammad Yusuf and Abubkr Shekau admitted to not receiving Western system of education in some of the videos presented for this research. See this link for details on Shekau admitting it [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU)



them. The followers tend to see the leaders as the voices that speak out on their behalf. They believe the group leaders have provided them with resources to build resilience and create a society, which recognizes them in a way the Nigerian government did not.

Having religion as a significant tool mobilized rapid support for Boko Haram. They manipulated their sources of knowledge and interpreted it in a way to promote their agenda. The masses, with little or no knowledge, are the majority of their victims. It is common in the Muslim environments of Nigeria to find people that can pronounce and write the Arabic language, however, they do not understand the meaning. Another common mentality in the society is absolute submission to people with knowledge of religion, as the tradition holds they should not be questioned or criticized for their mistakes. Muhammad Yusuf relied on and utilized this tradition to build his cult group.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of this research's findings, investing more into education in several aspects in Nigeria is recommended. Both secular and religious systems of education need to be enhanced. Regarding Islamic religion, courses on Arabic language should be encouraged to give students the ability to engage critically with sources of religious knowledge. Critical thinking and criticism of scholars should also be encouraged. This would eliminate the perception of infallible Muslim clerics and reduce the chances of manipulating religion into setting personal goals.

Hate speech in places of worships, through the delivered sermons or lectures, can be stopped through constant monitoring. To achieve this result, nationally recognized religious authorities can organize and check the weekly speeches. Severe penalties should be the consequences for violation.

Furthermore, dialogues between the different religions within the country should be encouraged. Ways such as invitations and participations of the different religions within their programs can also be encouraged. For instance, the Muslim organizations could invite the Christian associations to participate in seminars and lectures organized and vice versa. This could defuse the tensions between the followers of the religions and maintain communal relationship in the society.

As the government provides supplies to the victims of Boko Haram at the internally displaced camps around the country, quick rehabilitation and relocation to their respective communities should be the priority, after it has been secured. The pressure in the camps leaves many people vulnerable to harmful attachments and desperation, which could result in an

increased likelihood to support Boko Haram or other such groups. The government can prevent this by providing secure attachments, such as employment for the victims and increased community engagement.

The government should engage convicted Boko Haram members with a thorough de-radicalization process. This can be done by educating them under learned clerics from the country's recognized religious institutions, to give them better understanding about Islam. Vocational activities should also be included to enable them to earn a living after serving their sentences.

With Boko Haram posing as threat to other nations, co-operating between regional and international partners should be encouraged in a way that will defeat the terrorist organization. One important way this could occur is through substantial international development aid, to provide employment opportunities to combat terrorism.

The issue of Boko Haram is an intriguing one, which could be usefully explored in further research. This research is limited to certain extent that may encourage further research. For instance, the doctrines of Boko Haram that were analyzed was limited to only three. Further analysis on other doctrines can be done. The focus of the period was limited to the early development of the group, i.e. during the time of Muhammad Yusuf and before the split of the group. Exploring on the group at its present state could be recommended. The limitations of the primary sources to audiovisual materials has left the research to translating the videos. The translation of such materials from the local Nigerian languages to other languages will give access to non-native speakers to explore into the materials.

The Nigerian government's conflict with Boko Haram is a continuous situation at present. The current approach to combating the group, which focuses on military action, is not enough. Some important aspects that contributed to the emergence of the group are poor religious understanding and low economic opportunities. These aspects need to be part of the solution in combating Boko Haram.

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